

The Friends of Boothe Park, Inc. is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 organization in Stratford, CT (S21, H120), which manages the Museum function at the Town-owned Boothe Memorial Park & Museum in Stratford, CT. We offer school programs, Museum tours, and an Annual May Opening Day Event, free-of-charge to the Public, and also raise funds through Special events, two times a year. We were fortunate to receive CT Cultural Fund support in 2022, and again in 2023, which has had a tremendous positive impact on our organization and the public we serve.

We have read that the Governor's budget returns State funding for arts, culture, and tourism to 2019 levels, which was inadequate then and is even less adequate now. If we go back to pre-pandemic funding levels, the State will lose the considerable investments it made in these sectors in the FY2022/2023 budget.

Please consider, at \$1.11 per capita, pre-pandemic State funding for tourism ranks lowest among our neighbors—Rhode Island (\$5.05), New York (\$3.07), and Massachusetts (\$1.65)—making it difficult to compete for tourists in those markets.

Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Tourism Coalition have worked together on an **Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding Roadmap** that offers legislators a guide **to meaningful, reliable, and equitable investment in these important contributors to the State's economy and workforce.**

The **Roadmap** addresses the historical underfunding, by proposing an investment that is:

- At a level that fully supports tourism and cultural organizations in making Connecticut a more attractive place to visit, work, and live.
- Consistent over time to minimize operational disruption, improve long-term planning and sustainability, and maximize the return on the State's investment.
- Distributed so that arts and cultural organizations -- especially those that have been historically under-resourced -- have equal access to funding opportunities, and so that Connecticut can compete with neighboring states for visitors.
- Backed up by metrics and data that demonstrate value.
- Administered by trusted public and private partners to ensure accountability.

Connecticut's arts, culture, and tourism sector is comprised of more than 1,000 organizations, and represents \$40 Billion (13.4%) of the State Domestic Product. The sector directly and indirectly employs a workforce of 175,000. When adequately

funded, State investments return \$3 in revenues for each \$1 invested, and returns begin to be realized in the same fiscal year.

The CT Cultural Funds Operating Support grant funds received by the Friends of Boothe Park in 2022 enabled us to develop a functional website, which not only enables us to tell our story and provide information about planning a visit and various events to the Public, but also allows them to purchase tickets to special events, become members, make online donations, and stay informed via email contact. In 2023, the Cultural Funds Operating Support grant funds will enable us to organize space for back-office activities, to include the storage and maintenance of Boothe archival materials, an exhibits preparation workspace, a library area, and a records filing area.

In behalf of the Friends of Boothe Park, Inc. organization, I wish to thank the Committee members for their kind consideration, and urge you to use the **Funding Roadmap** mentioned earlier, to ensure that the considerable investment the Legislature made in the arts, culture, and tourism in the current budget is not lost.

Please do not allow the Governor's budget to take us backwards!